

and soon many of his compositions became favorites in Greece and other places where Greek music is played. His popularity grew because people related to his songs about life in unfamiliar surroundings and in difficult times; songs about the comfort of family and friends; songs about the joy of hopes fulfilled.

Now, even in his twilight years, George Katsaros still composes and performs. At 106 years of age he is immaculately dressed, his back straight, his eyes bright with ideas yet to be expressed. Accolades, such as his 1990 State of Florida Folk Life Heritage Award, or his selection as grand marshal of the 1994 Tarpon Springs Christmas parade, don't lull him into inactivity; they inspire him to continue on.

Steve Frangos, in his 1992 study of the international Greek entertainment industry, noted that Katsaros merits recognition on a national level "for his singular contributions not only to the ongoing development of Greek music but as one of the finest proponents of traditional ethnic music ever to perform in America." I am proud to call him a fellow American and a friend.

EL REGRESO FOUNDATION

HON. NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 11, 1995

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, on September 23, 1994, I attended the graduation ceremony for El Regreso Foundation, a bilingual drug and alcohol abuse treatment program in the Williamsburg, Brooklyn section of my district. The event was an incredibly moving experience filled with tears and applause. The feeling of hope overcoming pain and abuse permeated the evening's festivities.

Overcoming the greatest odds and barriers, these graduates literally received a new lease on life, a life formerly plagued with violence, crime, and drug use.

This graduation was a perfect example of the ability of our people to take hold of their lives and turn them around, to be able to look into their selves and recognize that they do not want to become another statistic.

Events such as this one at El Regreso, are an inspiration to us all. They are of extreme importance to communities such as Williamsburg, which struggle daily for sources of hope. And while the media bombards us daily with stories of violence, crime, and despair, these and other success stories go unnoticed.

Success stories such as the one of Carlos Pagan. He too overcame heavy drug use and a hard street life, to become the founder and executive director of El Regreso. He is now a source of inspiration to untold numbers of men and women who go through El Regreso's Program, and a bright beacon of light illuminating the dark waters of addiction.

In closing, I salute Carlos Pagan and the staff of El Regreso for reminding our community that the best weapons against poverty, discrimination and even fear are not the escapes offered by powerful hallucinogenics. The best weapons against these enemies are the potency of pride and the power of belief in themselves.

NATIONAL GAMBLING IMPACT AND POLICY COMMISSION

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 11, 1995

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation establishing the National Gambling Impact and Policy Commission. This blue ribbon panel will be composed of nine members—three appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, three appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, and three appointed by the President of the United States. One of the appointees should be a State Governor.

America is on a gambling binge. The question facing this commission will be: are we trading long-term economic growth and prosperity for short-term gain? Gambling is one of the fastest growing industries in the nation and is becoming America's pastime. In 1993, Americans made more trips to casinos than they did to major league ballparks. At the turn of the century, gambling was prohibited. Today, however, there are 37 State lotteries, casinos operate in 23 States, and 95 percent of all Americans are expected to live within a 3- or 4-hour drive of a casino by the year 2000. Only two States, Hawaii and Utah, forbid wagering.

Reports indicate that cash-strapped State and local governments will continue to authorize more gambling operations in the hope that they will be an economic bonanza. Governments often fail to consider, though, that gambling can bring on economic problems to their jurisdictions that far outweigh any benefits. Negative impacts on State and local economies, small businesses, and families can no longer be ignored. Crime and social problems related to gambling could add to already overburdened criminal justice and social welfare systems. This is an issue of national economic importance, and I believe the new Congress should examine it closely over the coming months.

The Commission established by this legislation will conduct a comprehensive legal and factual study of gambling in the United States. I will outline some of the specific matters to be studied and some examples of why they should be studied.

The Commission should review the costs and effectiveness of State and Federal gambling regulatory policy, including whether Indian gaming should be regulated by States as well as the Federal Government. Indian gambling accounts for about 5 percent of all casino gambling and that figure is growing at an extraordinary rate. Unlike New Jersey and Nevada which has extremely costly, mature, and effective regulatory structures, the Federal effort to regulate Indian gaming to prevent the infiltration of organized crime is scanty at best. There are less than 30 staff persons to regulate Indian gaming operations throughout the country. The Commission should recommend whether or not Indian gaming should be regulated by the States.

The Commission should examine the economic impact of gambling on other businesses. As gambling proliferates, job-creating wealth is shifted from savings and investment to gambling which creates no useful product. Income spent on gambling is not spent on

movies, clothes, recreation services, or other goods or services. Gambling cannibalizes other businesses such as restaurants. For example, the number of restaurants in Atlantic City declined from 243 in 1977, the year after casinos were legalized, to 146 in 1987.

The Commission should make a detailed assessment and review of the political contributions and influence of gambling promoters on the development of public policy regulating gambling. Proponents of gambling raised about \$14 million in their losing battle to bring casino gambling to Florida. Millions in contributions are given to lawmakers yearly by gambling interests. In my own State of Virginia, ten casino industry groups spent \$317,000 lobbying Virginia's legislators to roll the dice and bet on casino or riverboat gambling. Gambling interest's role in the formation of public policy is important because a recent study notes that most economic impact statements about gambling overwhelmingly are written from the gambling proponents perspective.

The Commission should make a detailed assessment of the relationship between gambling and crime. In one report, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement opposed legalizing casino gambling because they indicated "casinos will result in more Floridians and visitors being robbed, raped, assaulted, and otherwise injured." Sometimes organized crime is associated with gambling because of the huge amounts of cash involved, making it an easy target of money launderers. Drug money, extortion money, and prostitution money are all laundered through such operations.

Gambling may on occasion breed political corruption. Seventeen South Carolina legislators were convicted of taking bribes to legalize horse and dog track racing. Six Arizona legislators pleaded guilty in 1990 for accepting bribes on a bill to legalize casino gambling. Seven Kentucky legislators pleaded guilty of bribery for the same. In 1990, a former West Virginia Governor pleaded guilty to taking a bribe from racing interests. In 1994, a West Virginia lottery director was sentenced to Federal prison for rigging a video lottery contract.

Because of crime associated with casino gambling, regulatory agencies in New Jersey spend over \$59 million annually to monitor the city's casinos. In 1992, the Wall Street Journal reported that since 1976, Atlantic City's police budget has tripled to \$24 million while the local population has decreased 20 percent. During the first 3 years of casino gambling, Atlantic City went from 50th in the Nation in per capita crime to 1st. Overall, from 1977 to 1990, the crime rate in that city rose by an incredible 230 percent. Organized criminal activity is so pervasive that the American Insurance Institute estimates that 40 percent of all white collar crime is gambling related.

The Commission should also study the impact of pathological, or problem gambling on individuals, families, social institutions, criminal activity, and the economy. Gambling social costs include direct regulatory costs, lost productivity costs, direct crime costs, as well as harder-to-price costs such as suicide, and family disintegration. Various studies indicate that the mean gambling-related debt of people in compulsive gambling therapy ranged from about \$53,000 to \$92,000. Compulsive gamblers in New Jersey were accumulating an estimated \$514 million in yearly debt.